# ES2660 Ground Rules for Group Work –Conventions Underlying Academic Conversations.

The underlying assumptions to the group work is that you are each expected to demonstrate the characteristics of a critical thinker in your interactions. This means for example, that you will care to get things right, to be as accurate as possible but that you will also care for the person, meaning that you respect differences of opinion and use your CT abilities to see different POVs and work your way through various issues toward a resolution – that resolution being your project. Good group work may result in better marks – because there is a consistency in the writing, quality of ideas and degree of creativity that is seen because you have helped each other to make the most of your individual contributions.

Here are some handy ground rules.

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|  | Situation | Rule |
| 1 | Lots of work, mountains of detail | 1. See the big picture 2. Break things up into more manageable components 3. Divide tasks among members 4. Specify clear deliverables 5. Document what you agreed on 6. Commit to the schedule |
| 2 | Complex and ambivalent task | 1. Ask questions, e.g. what is the intention of the activity? 2. Check your hypothesis with other teams and with the tutor (do not just moan “dunno what this is about, tell me” – there will be times that no one can tell you anything, it is up to you to find a solution. So ask the right questions. 3. Break things up into more manageable components. |
| 3 | Differing view points | 1. Listen respectfully 2. Disagree respectfully – disagree on the content/point/information WITH objective reasons 3. Explain where the point might be flawed – do not at any time say the speaker has made a mistake – engage with points not the person 4. Agree to disagree if possible 5. Seek mediation (tutor) if not possible to agree to disagree or to resolve by yourselves 6. Remember not everything can be solved by “majority” decisions, some points cannot be conceded if they are based on principle or beliefs, therefore cannot be forced. 7. Use emotional intelligence 8. Set your own ground rules for achieving group harmony. |
| 4 | Lack of inspiration | 1. Brainstorm 2. Take a break e.g. short walk and then talk 3. Make the decision to just get down and tackle the task – dealing with the mundane must-do stuff and dealing with it well is a life skill. Don’t procrastinate. 4. Keep your tutor updated of your progress (not lack thereof!) |
| 5 | Team members behaving unconventionally, e.g. missing meetings, not paying attention during meetings, missing deadlines | 1. Contact person 2. Communicate problem 3. Resolve problem amiably 4. If no resolution, make a note of who picked up the sack and attach it to your project, tutor will deal with the marks later. |
| 6 | Personality clashes | 1. Prevent most of these clashes by appointing a leader or a moderator, someone who is good with people skills or the best with people. 2. Try to understand source of frustrations, work on a compromise. |
| 7 | Producing the best work possible out of your group  Image from <https://www.joann.com/marvel-avengers-infinity-war-cotton-fabric/16003337.html> | 1. Leverage on strengths e.g. member with strong language skills – overall editor. Member with strong graphic visualisation skills – lead the multimedia component; member with strong programming skills – i/c workflow plan – as he/she can see how processes cascade 2. Identify skills needed for the project and discuss what strengths you already have that can be transferred or applied to the present context. Cast your mind t those superhero action movies – isn’t that how those superhero strengths work? Use the same principle. |

### Further reading:

Tips for effective group working <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/metallurgy-materials/about/cases/group-work/tips.aspx>

Ten Recommendations for improving group work <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/10-recommendations-improving-group-work/>

Nine ways to do well in a group especially points 4, 5, 7 and 9 <https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/how-to-work-well-in-a-group.html>